1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

115 account intelligible we must anticipate certain later chapters to the extent of defining the terms *waruge* and *yaka*, that is we must refer briefly to the essential features of the Vedda social system and religion.

614 Every Vedda belongs to a *waruge* or clan, as the term may be translated, and among a large number of the Vedda communities still existing, exogamy is the absolute rule. Further, with exogamy is associated descent in the maternal line, so that the fundamentals of the social system of the Veddas may, perhaps, be summed up as a clan organization with female descent. There is no evidence, as far as we can determine, of any dual organization of the clans, but perhaps they had originally a territorial distribution. Ignoring for a moment such debatable matters, the Vedda clans are:—

(1) Morane *waruge*.
(2) Unapane *waruge*.
(3) Namadewa or Nabudan *waruge*.
(4) Aembela *waruge*.
(5) Uru *waruge*.
(6) Tala *waruge*.
(7) A number of other so-called *waruge* of minor strength and importance, which perhaps may be local groups that have forgotten their origin and have assumed a name (sometimes obviously a place-name) as a convenience.

● 769 Turning now to the Vedda religion the word *yaka* (feminine *yakini*, plural *yaku*) is used to denote the spirits of the dead, and since the Vedda religion is essentially a cult of the dead, it is not surprising that the propitiation of the spirits of dead relatives, called the Nae Yaku, is at once its most obvious and important feature. With this is associated the cult of the spirits of certain long dead Veddas who may be regarded as legendary heroes. The most important of these is Kande Yaka, the *yaka* of Kande Wanniya, a celebrated hunter who lived many generations ago and whose assistance is invoked for good hunting. Kande Yaka especially helps in the tracking of sambur and spotted deer, and with him is often associated Bilindi Yaka, the *yaka* of his younger brother Bilindi. When a deer has been killed the head is set aside, and with rice and

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

coconut milk (when procurable) dedicated to Kande Yaka, after which it is eaten with the rice. An essentially similar ceremony often spoken of by the same name (*kirikoraha*), but in which no meat is offered, is held after a death in order to propitiate the spirit of the dead man. The majority of Veddas believe that the Nae Yaku go to Kande Yaka, and become in some sense his attendants, and Kande Yaka, sometimes accompanied by Bilindi Yaka, is generally invoked at the beginning of the Nae Yaku ceremony. It was stated more than once that the Nae Yaku could not come to the offering unless accompanied by Kande Yaka, who was even spoken of as bringing the Nae Yaku. Some of our informants also said that the spirit of the deceased resorted to Kande Yaka and obtained his permission to accept offerings from his living relatives, in return for which the Nae Yaka would assist or injure them according to their behaviour, so that Kande Yaka, besides being of the greatest assistance in hunting, has also become the Lord of the Dead.

The Kandyan already mentioned, whose full title is Karagahavella Adenayaka Mudiyanselage Tissahami, visited us at Bandaraduwa; he lived at Bakiyella some ten miles from our camp. Mr Bibile, who was distantly related to the old man, told us that he must be nearly a hundred years old, since he had been brought to the wild country of the Eastern Province by his mother during the rebellion of 1818, his father having fallen in the fighting. His hair, of which he retained a fair quantity, was absolutely white and worn short, his complexion was pale with age, he had a slight unilateral facial paralysis and he walked with the aid of a stick, his back being bowed and both knees somewhat flexed; but he was withal an extraordinarily active old man, extremely intelligent and with an excellent memory, the play of the muscles of his face showing how well he realised the import of the questions addressed to him and how much they interested him. Further, his frank replies when he did not understand a question and the emphatic manner in which he delivered his answers carried conviction of the value of his evidence, and we believe that no one who listened to the old man would have considered him other than a good witness.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

614 554 Uru *waruge* should carry game and honey for the men of Morane and Unapane.

291 184 Some of the village Veddas of those days had cloth, and when dancing to the *yaku* they wore the long cloth garment called *hangalla*; the wilder Veddas had no cloth and wore leaves, but it was not clear whether they had not also a certain amount of bark cloth which was their ordinary covering, and leaves may have been worn in addition when they invoked the *yaku*[1].

685 609 778 826 The old man knew of the custom of a man keeping a piece of human liver in his betel pouch; it was universal and in his young days every Vedda desired to have a piece. Strangers, even Veddas, who intruded on the hunting grounds would be killed and their liver taken, no other part of the dead man being used, and the custom gave rise neither to warfare nor to vendettas[2].

764 768 Caves in which a death occurred were deserted, the corpse being covered with leaves; perhaps men very near dissolution were left before death had actually occurred, but this did not seem certain. Bones found in the cave when the group returned to it after an interval of some ten or twelve years were thrown away quite carelessly. The spirits of the dead became the Nae Yaku who, with Kande Yaka and Bilindi Yaka, gave game and prosperity. The *kirikoraha* ceremony was performed for the Nae Yaku, and *adukku* (cooked food), which even in the old days consisted of coconut and rice, was offered to them. The wilder Veddas gave nothing to the Buddhist priests and made no offerings at shrines, nor did they know the Kataragam God, Kanda Swami, though the village Veddas worshipped him and knew that Walliame had been taken to wife by him, and honey was presented to the goddess at certain shrines, especially one at Kokote Sila, frequented by the village Veddas.

775 769 771 184

535 751 A few of the village Veddas would dance for the Sinhalese in order to protect their cattle, bring prosperity to their villages, and secure them from epidemics; they would dance *kolamaduwa* which the old man pointed out was derived from a

[1] Cf. p. 313.
[2] For details of this custom see Chapter VIII.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

betel bags and strike-a-lights may all be buried in the graves of male "Culture Veddas," and in one such grave they even found bullets[1].

When an attempt is made to discover the nature of the noxious influence felt in the place of death, the usual answer given is to the effect that "if we stayed where the death had occurred we should be pelted with stones." Further questions made it clear that in many instances there was no definite idea that some part of the dead man was the active agent in the stone-throwing; on the other hand some Veddas, and these as far as we could judge some of the least contaminated, definitely believed that it was the spirit or *yaka* of the dead man who would cause stones to rain on anybody staying near the corpse. And in this instance it was admittedly fear of the spirit of the dead individual that caused them to hurry from the site of death. Stone-throwing is the usual method by which the *yaku* show their displeasure, using *yaku* in the broadest sense, and by no means limiting this term to the spirits of the recent dead. It was clear that during certain disturbances described as "stone-throwing" no actual rocks or stones were moved or fell, and this was recognised by the Veddas who, however, continued to speak of the upheaval as "stone-throwing," which they ascribed to annoyance felt by the *yaku*. In one instance it was possible to say that the aggrieved *yaku* were not those of the recent dead. While camping within a couple of hundred yards of the Bendiyagalge caves in that part of the Uva jungle known as Henebedda we were startled between eleven and twelve one night by a deep groaning sound of considerable volume which was immediately followed by an outcry from the caves. Men shouted, women and children cried out, and every dog in the settlement howled its loudest. The noise which alarmed the cave occurred only once, and can hardly have lasted for more than ten seconds, but the chatter of people and the howling of dogs must have continued for about a quarter of an hour. We are entirely unable to state the cause of the noise, but suppose that it was due to one rock slipping upon another, or to the splitting of a mass of rock below the surface of the

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 494.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

ground, but no freshly exposed rock surfaces or any displacement of the soil was to be seen next morning in the neighbourhood of the caves or the country immediately round them. The Veddas, however, had no doubt as to the cause of the noise and described it as "stone-throwing," stating that a number of *yaku* must have been annoyed with their proceedings on the previous day, when, after going through the *kirikoraha* ceremony over a fine buck which one of them had shot the night before, they were tempted to show us some part of the *kolamaduwa* ceremony without providing the proper gifts for the *yaku* invoked on that occasion. They pointed out that it was the *yaku* of long dead Veddas who had manifested their displeasure by stone-throwing, though they all admitted that no one had seen the stones thrown or could show the stones with which the alleged bombardment had been effected. This, combined with the fact that a minority of Veddas frankly admit that the cause of leaving the site where death has occurred is fear of the *yaka*, seems to point to the whole process of desertion being due to fear of the spirit of the deceased, which for a short but indefinite time seems to be thought of as existing near the body it has left, though it was never possible to discover that this was a clearly formulated belief.

The matter may indeed be said to have been put beyond doubt by a discovery made by Mr Parker. The words *mal pasunae wannā* occur in a number of invocations to the Nae Yaku. We could obtain no translation for these words in the field, though it was said that they alluded to the dead man, but by comparing a number of invocations to the Nae Yaku Mr Parker ascertained that *mal* is used as the equivalent of both "flowers" and "Veddas," so that this expression, which is undoubtedly a term of address to the dead man's spirit, is to be translated "driver away of Veddas."

Although the fear of the dead (as expressed by leaving the site of death) occurs among all the wilder Veddas, we met with a few old men, notably Poromala (Walaha) of Henebedda, and Handuna of Godatalawa, who were by no means confident that all men on their death became *yaku*. Although they were sure that all important and influential men, as well as those who

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

during life had the power of calling and becoming possessed by the *yaku*, became *yaku* after death, they considered that it was by no means certain that any part of quite ordinary individuals survived death. At Godatalawa such doubts in the case of particular dead individuals might be settled by calling upon the deceased at a Nae Yaku ceremony when the following invocation was used:

Lord! New Driver away of Vaeddas, if it is true that there are miracles, killing one wild monitor lizard in the jungle while coming I must meet with a sambar deer. (Be pleased) to drink, Driver away of Vaeddas, this young coconut[1].

If much game was killed after this ceremony the deceased was considered to have become a *yaka* ready and willing to help his friends and relatives.

To ascertain the actual condition of the spirits of the departed for the first few days after death is a matter of some difficulty, for although certain communities have perfectly definite views on this point, others have not; hence it will be convenient to leave this matter for the present and to return to it when the attitude of the Veddas towards their dead has been further defined.

As each Vedda community consists of a small number of families who, since cousin marriage prevails, are usually related both by blood and marriage, the *yaku* of the recent dead, called collectively Nae Yaku, are supposed to stand towards the surviving members of the group in the light of friends and relatives, who if well treated will continue to show lovingkindness to their survivors, and only if neglected will show disgust and anger by withdrawing their assistance, or becoming even actively hostile. Hence it is generally considered necessary to present an offering to the newly dead within a week or two of their decease; but this is not invariably the case, for a few Veddas said that they would not hold a Nae Yaku ceremony until they specially required the help of the *yaku* or until misfortune threatened or had overtaken them.

Among most Veddas the offering must consist of cooked rice and coconut milk, the food that every Vedda esteems above all

[1] The transliteration of this invocation will be found in Chapter X, p. 377.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

other, but betel leaves and areca nut are often added and the oldest survivor of a small group of comparatively unsophisticated Veddas seen at Godatalawa stated that in the old days this offering would have consisted of yams and water, if, as was often the case, coconuts and rice—which were only to be secured with difficulty and by barter—could not be obtained. In each community there is one man called *kapurale* or *dugganawa*, who has the power and knowledge requisite to call the *yaku*, and in the ceremony of presenting the offering called *Nae Yaku Natanawa* (literally the dancing of the *Nae Yaku*), this man calls upon the *yaka* of the recently dead man to come and take the offering. It was stated that *dugganawa* was an older word than *kapurale* and was in fact a Vedda word, though it was soon obvious that only a minority of Veddas knew it. The *dugganawa*[1] who throughout this book will be spoken of as the shaman, becomes possessed by the *yaka* of the dead man who speaks through the mouth of the shaman in hoarse guttural accents, declaring that he approves the offering, that he will assist his kinsfolk in hunting, and often stating the direction in which the next hunting party should go.

Each shaman trains his successor, usually taking as his pupil his own son or his sister's son (i.e. his actual or potential son-in-law). Handuna of Sitala Wanniya learnt from his father. At Henebedda we were told that a special hut was built in which the shaman and his pupil slept, and from which women were excluded. It seems probable that this is only done among Veddas who have come under Sinhalese influence, as among them, but not among the wilder Veddas, women are considered unclean, and there was no isolation of the shaman and his pupil at Sitala Wanniya.

Sella Wanniya of Unuwatura Bubula was instructed by his father, and during his apprenticeship he resided with him in a hut into which his mother was not allowed to come.

The pupil learns to repeat the invocations used at the various ceremonies, but no food is offered to the *yaku*. At Sitala Wanniya we were told that the shaman recited the following formula, explaining to the *yaku* that he is teaching his pupil:

[1] See footnote, p. 16.

1:Seligmann and Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

791 he was ready to suffer this inconvenience. Of course under
826 these conditions we did not take a lock of his hair.

His son-in-law Kaira, although he assisted Handuna in dancing, offered no objection to our collecting a sample of his hair, nor did any of the other members of the community.

• 769 Besides the shaman one or more of the near relatives of the
791 dead man may become possessed, but this though common is not invariable. The yaka leaves the shaman soon after he has promised his favour and success in hunting, the shaman often collapsing as the spirit departs and in any case appearing in an exceedingly exhausted state for a few minutes. However, he soon comes round when he and all present, constituting the men, women and children of the group, eat the offering, usually on the spot on which the invocation took place, though this is not absolutely necessary, for on one occasion at Sitala Wanniya when a rain squall threatened, the food was quickly carried to the cave a few hundred yards distant from the dancing ground.

769 It was clear that this eating of the food which had been offered to the yaku was an act of communion, and an essential part of the ceremony which was thought to bring health and good fortune, for some communities even anointed the heads of their dogs with the milk of the offering, explaining that this was done because of their value. This was the case at Henebedda, while the patriarch of the Godatalawa Veddas explained that some of the offering was always given to their dogs to eat, for the reason that they depended upon them in hunting. In one Nae Yaku ceremony (Bandaraduwa) the shaman fed the nearest relatives of the dead man immediately after the yaku left him, holding the bowl containing the offering to their mouths, while among the Sitala Wanniya Veddas, not only did the shaman, while still possessed, feed the children of the group from the bowl and smear its contents over their faces, but a number of members of the group, including the grandchildren of the dead man whose yaka possessed the shaman at the time, place a small portion of the offering in the shaman's mouth. The strength of the desire for the companionship and communion with the spirits of the kindly dead was very strong, and it was generally felt that shamans, and those frequently possessed by

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

the *yaku*, might expect to have especially good luck on account of their close association with the spirits. Many instances occurred which showed how strong was the feeling of good fellowship which the living had for the spirits of their dead. Thus at Sitala Wanniya, on the occasion of the performance of a *Nae Yaku* ceremony got up at our request, Handuna, the shaman and leading man in the small community, volunteered the statement that he and his people were delighted to hold the ceremony, since it was seldom that they were able to offer their *yaku* such food as that provided by us. After his own father had been invoked and had expressed his unqualified pleasure at the good things provided for him, there was some discussion as to further dancing, because the dancer really felt exhausted, but all urged the continuation of the ceremony, since there were other *yaku* who might well be invoked on an occasion when an unusually plenteous supply of food was provided for them. Again, in the ceremony which insured the safe taking of rock honey, it was explained that every male member of the little community must perform the dance, since only thus could they certainly expect to share in the benefits to be reaped from the goodwill of the *yaku*. But perhaps the best example of the feeling of affectionate regard and of kindly good-fellowship existing between the living and the dead is afforded by the end of the invocation on the occasion of the *Nae Yaku* ceremony at Sitala Wanniya, for surely there could be no closer communion between the quick and the dead than that implied in the invocation, which is fully carried into effect by every member of the community sharing in the food that has been offered to the *yaku*.

"Salutation! Salutation! Part [of our] relatives having called [you] in time (i.e. at the right time) [we] give you white rice. [You] eat [and] drink. Do not think any wrong (i.e. do not form an unfavourable opinion of us). We also eat and drink [the same food]."

The above account is an outline of the simplest form of death ceremony such as was described to us at Godatalawa, but usually the matter is complicated by the invocation of certain *yaku* other than the *Nae Yaku*. Many generations ago there lived a Vedda called Kande Wanniya, a mighty hunter, who at his death became Kande Yaka, and under this name is constantly

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

769 invoked to give success in hunting. With Kande Yaka is also associated the *yaka* of his younger brother Bilindi, who is commonly believed to have been killed by Kande Wanniya in a fit of temper and who according to another version is not the brother but the brother-in-law of Kande Yaka. It is usual to invoke Kande Yaka and also Bilindi Yaka at the beginning of a *Nae Yaku* ceremony, and it was pointed out at different times by a number of our informants that the *Nae Yaku* could not come to the offerings unless accompanied by Kande Yaka, who was even spoken of as bringing the *Nae Yaku* with him. In fact, many Veddas stated that the *Nae Yaku* go to Kande Yaka and become his attendants; this point of view was illustrated by the fact that in two death dances seen (one held for a man who had died seven days previously, the other a rehearsal performed for our benefit), Kande Yaka and Bilindi Yaka were invoked, and possessed the shaman and gave signs of their favour to the group of Veddas present, before the shaman became possessed by the *Nae Yaku*. Further, many of our informants, especially the less sophisticated, pointed out that soon after death the spirit of the deceased resorted to Kande Yaka in order to obtain his permission to accept offerings from their living relatives, and to obtain power from him to assist them in return for their offerings, or to injure them in the event of their bad behaviour. Thus Kande Yaka, who is of especial assistance in hunting, becomes Lord of the Dead. We have, however, little doubt that to the majority of Veddas Kande Yaka is especially the *yaka* who gives success in hunting, and that his relation to the dead does not leap to their minds on the mention of his name as does the idea of his helpfulness in hunting, for Kande Yaka was essentially a friendly and helpful *yaka*, who, unlike many other *yaku* usually beneficent, never sent sickness; in fact, Kande Yaka the spirit scarcely differs as patron of hunters from Kande Wanniya the mighty hunter, still living and showing kindness and helpfulness towards the people among whom he dwelt.

770 It is now possible to consider the condition of the spirit of the deceased for a few days after death, according to those Veddas who state that a definite period elapses before the spirit

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

becomes a *yaka*, for it appears that properly speaking the word *yaka* should not be applied to the spirit of the dead for the first few days after it has left the body. During this short period the word *prana karaya* (living one) should be used for the spirit of the deceased, for it has not yet attained the condition implied by the term *yaka*. Among the Henebedda Veddas it was thought that the *prana karaya* resorted to Kande Yaka a few days, perhaps three or five, after death, and then obtained permission from him to accept offerings from the living, and thus become numbered among his attendants, the *Nae Yaku*; but beyond a vague idea that the spirit might perhaps exist for a short time at the site where death had occurred, these folk had no knowledge of its state before it reached Kande Yaka. The Bandaraduwa Veddas, who had come more under Sinhalese and Tamil influence, asserted that the spirit of the deceased spent some days in the neighbourhood of the death scene, which it only left to seek the Kataragam God and obtain his permission to become a *yaka* and pass into the train of attendants on Kande Yaka, and so become a *Nae Yaku* capable of accepting offerings from the living and in return helping or injuring them.

The method of invocation of the *yaku* is essentially the same in all Vedda ceremonies; an invocation is sung by the shaman and often by the onlookers, while the shaman slowly dances, usually round the offering that has been prepared for the *yaku*. Sometimes the invocations are quite appropriate and either consist of straightforward appeals to the *yaka* invoked for help, or recite the deeds and prowess of the *yaka* when he too was a man, as when Kande Yaka is addressed as "continuing to go from hill to hill [who] follows up the traces from footprint to footprint of excellent sambar deer." But at other times the charms seem singularly inappropriate; probably in many of these instances they are the remains of old Sinhalese charms that have not only been displaced from their proper position and function, but have been mangled in the process, and have in the course of time become incomprehensible. As the charm is recited over and over again the shaman dances more and more quickly, his voice becomes hoarse and he soon becomes possessed by the *yaka*, and, although he does not lose consciousness and can coordinate

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

his movements, he nevertheless does not retain any clear recollection of what he says, and only a general idea of the movements he has performed. Although there is doubtless a certain element of humbug about some of the performances, we believe that this is only intentional among the tamer Veddas accustomed to show off before visitors, and that among the less sophisticated Veddas the singing and movements of the dance soon produce a more or less automatic condition, in which the mind of the shaman, being dominated by his belief in the reality of the *yaku*, and of his coming possession, really acts without being in a condition of complete volitional consciousness. Most sincere practitioners whom we interrogated in different localities agreed that although they never entirely lost consciousness, they nearly did so at times, and that they never fully appreciated what they said when possessed, while at both the beginning and end of possession they experienced a sensation of nausea and vertigo and the ground seemed to rock and sway beneath their feet.

Some men, including Handuna of Sitala Wanniya, whom we consider one of the most trustworthy of our informants, said that they were aware that they shivered and trembled when they became possessed, and Handuna heard booming noises in his ears as the spirit left him and full consciousness returned. He said this usually happened after he had ceased to dance. We could not hear of any shaman who saw visions while possessed or experienced any olfactory or visual hallucinations before, during, or after possession. The Veddas recognise that women may become possessed, but we only saw one instance of (alleged) possession in a woman, which occurred at a rehearsal of a dance got up for our benefit on our first visit to Bendiyagalge, during which we are confident that none of the dancers were really possessed. Although we did not see the beginning of this woman's seizure we have little doubt that there was a large element of conscious deception in her actions, for when we became aware of her she was sitting bolt upright with her eyes shut and the lids quivering, apparently from the muscular effort of keeping them tightly closed, while opposite her was Tissahami the Vedda Arachi muttering spells over a coconut shell half full of water with which he dabbed her eyes and face.

Seligmann & Seligmann E-8 (1907-1908) 1911
AX8 Vedda AX8

Besides the important part in the Vedda cult of the dead played by the propitiation of the *Nae Yaku*, and of the *yaku* of certain other Veddas such as Kande Wanniya who as *yaku* have attained to special importance (approaching that of culture heroes in other forms of belief), there is a certain feeling of reverence for a host of unnamed *yaku*. Little attention is paid to these but, since it is stated that they too were once men, the suggestion may be hazarded that they represent the *yaku* of the forgotten dead. These *yaku*, although all around in the jungle, are in some instances thought of as vaguely attached to special localities, especially to glades in the forest, unusually large trees, and above all large rocks and rocky hilltops. The *yaku* of rocks and hilltops, indeed, tend to become named, taking the name of the hill they inhabit; even among the less civilised Veddas they are sometimes identified with the *yaku* of Vedda headmen who have lived on or near the hills. On the other hand among the more sophisticated Veddas these *yaku* tend to become less and less the spirits of dead Veddas, and finally, under Tamil influence, are thought of as dangerous spirits, immigrants from beyond the Ocean, each of whom with a female of his own species haunts the hilltops and sends disease. Somewhat akin to these *yaku* in their less dangerous forms are the *kiriamma* (literally milk mothers, i.e. grandmothers), the *yaku* of Vedda women, generally the wives of Vedda headmen or chiefs, many of whom are thought of as haunting the sides and tops of hills where there are rocks and springs. They are sometimes jealous of people gathering honey—indeed there is a tendency to avoid rocky mountain tops on their account—but may be placated by a charm, though occasionally a little honey is left for them with a muttered *kapau kiriammala*—Eat O Kiriamma. Although they retain the fondness for children which they felt in their lifetime they not infrequently send sickness, at least among the more sophisticated Veddas.

A few *kiriamma* have become rather important *yaku*, notably an old woman of the Unapane clan now known as Unapane Kiriamma, but such *kiriamma* do not appear to be especially associated with rocky or hilly sites.

We are now in a position to discuss the possible evolution of

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

such specially important *yaku* as Kande Yaka and Bambura Yaka who may without exaggeration be said to have attained the position of heroes. It has been stated on p. 126 that according to certain Veddas not all the dead become *yaku* but only the spirits of specially important men or those who during life have the power of summoning the *yaku* to them. Further, the general impression we gathered was that the stronger the personality of the dead man, the more powerful and important was his *yaka*, and it may well be that the *yaka* of a particularly strong or skilled individual may be remembered by name and continue to receive offerings, even after the death of those near relatives to whom the spirit is one of the most important of the Nae Yaku on account of the blood bond between them. This appears to have happened in the case of Panikkia Yaka invoked at the present day by the Henebedda Veddas, and we shall now attempt to trace the history of this spirit.

It was stated in the first chapter that a number of the Veddas were politically organized in the 16th century and that one of the most important of their chiefs, described in a contemporary manuscript as Panikki the Vedda, was appointed to the high office of Bandara Mudiyanse. Further, it is recorded that Panikki the Vedda caught elephants and took them to the king. Now at Henebedda at the present day Panikki Yaka is invoked in the Kolomaduwa ceremony to avert sickness alike from man and cattle, and to confer prosperity on villages and cattle-folds. Those Veddas, a minority, who know anything of this *yaka*, state that he is the spirit of a long dead Vedda who was especially skilled in capturing buffalo, and who on account of his great knowledge of jungle craft is still able to confer safety and jungle favour on those invoking him.

In Chapter 1 we have mentioned that the Vedda cult of the dead has infiltrated the beliefs of the Sinhalese, and we will now give some details of the Bandar cult to which we there alluded. Concerning this Mr Parker writes: "It is a common practice of the Kandian Sinhalese of that part of the country to make offerings to the spirits of the deceased chiefs and important ancestors.....

"They are all classed as Yakas by the Sinhalese and are

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

915
769

generally hurtful; but some have certain protective functions, and protect cattle and coconut trees and crops.

"The offerings are kept up everywhere in that part of the island to the present day at the Dewalas, and elsewhere. Luckily, it is a branch of their religion to which I devoted special attention...and although my lists are doubtless incomplete I have the names of considerably more than 100 of them.

"Some were included in the lists as important ancestors; others, the majority, because of their power, others because of their cruelty, or their sudden violent death.

"Panikki Vaedda occurs among them, and there are a few other names which may be those of Vaeddas,—such as Yapa, Hiti, Hapu etc...."

"I have been informed that every one for whom a *dana* or funéral feast is not offered (at which the spirit is supposed to be present) remains in the form of a homeless spirit (*preta*) or *yaka*. These commonly disappear in time and are forgotten. Some of them remain about their old abodes, and uncanny noises heard during the night in the houses are caused by these ghosts, as in Europe....

"The Sinhalese demonology is very intricate, and it is extremely difficult to understand. There are many classes of *yaku*; but I believe that this Bandar worship is the only indigenous portion of it. I have traced practically all the other demons to Southern India, although the *kapurala* claim that a few others, in addition to the Bandaras, are of local origin. They themselves admit that all the rest were imported from India.

"The twelve Vaedi Yaku are, I believe, an entirely different set of evil spirits....

"The Vaeddas told me that they are extremely malignant. Besides these, they said that the whole forest is full of local nameless Yaku, who make strange noises in the night and frighten people in various ways. This also is a firmly rooted Sinhalese belief; their estimate of the number is two millions."

The resemblance between this *Bandara* cult and the Vedda worship of the Nae Yaku is obvious and is still further shown by

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

775
769

the canonization as a Bandar of one Godegedara, an influential Ratemahatmaya, first of Wellasse and then of Badulla who died in 1872 and whose spirit now prevents disease among cattle, increases their milk, protects man and animals from beasts of prey, helps hunters and prevents their meeting wild beasts suddenly in the jungle and in fact gives success in all things[1]. About three months after his death certain unusual happenings suggested that one of the dead was trying to attract the attention of the living. An elephant appeared at Damenegama in Uva and in the neighbourhood, and although repeatedly shot at continued to come to the villages and tear the roofs off the houses, but did no other damage. This unusual behaviour led to the suspicion that one of the dead had sent the elephant, and accordingly the turning stone (*paena balanawa*) was consulted as to whether one of the old or recent dead was responsible. When it was ascertained that it was the latter, a ceremony *kamba kanuwa natanawa* was undertaken to discover whose was the spirit. The *kapurale* became possessed, when the spirit within him announced that he, Godegedara, had sent the elephant and that he desired to be honoured and invoked to help men. It was explained that the spirits of the dead always approach the living for the first time through animals, or signify their desire for offerings by making a man sick. The rank of the deceased is roughly estimated by the animal sent, in which, however, the spirit of the deceased is not immanent. The lion is said to be highest, then comes the elephant; the leopard indicates the spirit of a rather less exalted person.

It appears that the dead have no power to interfere in human affairs and take offerings until permission has been obtained from one or more high gods, of whom the chief is the Kataragam God. How the spirit obtains this permission was not clear, but the early signs of the power of the deceased were always in some way connected with the Kataragam God. Thus Godegedera caused the elephant of the Kataragam God to go mad at the *perahera* ceremony, and when Kosgama became a Bandar a leopard sent by him rode round the Kataragam temple on the

[1] A translation of the invocation used when calling upon Godegedera is given in the addendum to this chapter.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

back of one of the God's bulls, i.e., one of the *tavalam* bulls, bringing provisions and salt to the temple.

Kosgama Bandar is associated with Kosgama, where he lived in the 18th century or earlier. He refused to pay tribute to the king and from his invocation given elsewhere[1] it may be gathered that he rebelled and was betrayed by an adherent whom he trusted. He was captured, tied to a tree and shot to death with arrows. Kosgama Bandar was said to be especially helpful in litigation and in recovering lost cattle, but in fact he is of assistance in all ways.

We may now return to Panikki Yaka, who Mr Parker agrees with us may safely be identified as the spirit of the 16th century "Vedda" chief, Panikki the Vedda. In the same manner as this *yaka* has been remembered and has developed the characters of a Vedda hero, so we believe Kande Yaka and other hero Yaku of the wilder Veddas have arisen, for it is as a mighty Vedda of the old days that the Veddas revere Kande Yaka.

We need only assume that such heroes were unusually successful hunters, stronger personalities than their neighbours, so that their names were held in honour among a people more numerous than their immediate family circle, to see clearly how after their death their names would be continued in memory and their spirits be invoked by those who had admired and feared them, and by their children and children's children. It is entirely in harmony with this view that Kande Yaka should have become the Lord of the Dead, to whom the lesser spirits resort to obtain permission to accept offerings and to aid their still living relatives and former companions.

No reverence is paid to the heavenly bodies, and our old Kandyan informant knew nothing of any worship of the sun or moon. He nevertheless agreed that in his youth as at the present day the Veddas would call the moon Hande Deyo or Sande Deyo and the sun Ira Deyo respectively[2].

[1] "Note on the Bandar Cult of the Kandyan Sinhalese," *Man*, 1909, p. 77.

[2] We found Deyo to be commonly used for "god," the proper word for which is *deviyā*, pl. *deviyō*; but as explained to us by Mr Parker these words are often altered to *deyiya* and *deyiyo* and the Sinhalese "always say 'Kataragama Deyiya' or 'Deyiyo.' The plural forms are used honorifically with a singular meaning."

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

Even Nevill missed the essentials of the Vedda cult of the dead, though he shows that he knew something of what actually occurred. "The Vaedda religion seems to have been such that the spirit alone was recognised as human, and the flesh, when the spirit has left it, receives neither veneration nor superstitious reverence. Where the life left the body, there the body was left....Two or five days after the death, however, the relations were invited to the scene of funeral and a feast was held...to satisfy relations there had been no foul play....

"The Vaeddas of Bintenne, however, having assembled relations and neighbours, procure rice, or other grain, and decorate the pot in which it is cooked with sprays of the liniya tree[1], a shrub with leaves like our hazel, but with bright scarlet flowers. If no flowers can be got, bits of red cotton or other cloth should be used. The celebrant then dances round the pot of food, with an arrow in his hand, singing any chant he knows, and making obeisance to the food by a wave of the arrow. The food is then distributed....

"It is evident this custom cannot apply to those who formerly did not eat grain. These, however, were few. Roasted game would probably with such take the place of grain, and the latter seems only used as the best and most unusual food procurable, much as our poor try to provide cake, and not bread and cheese, etc. at weddings....

"Bodies were never buried until the English Government endeavoured to enforce burial. The Vaeddas have not the least objection to the corpse being buried, but object greatly to being forced to dig the grave...[2]."

Although the Sarasins underestimated the importance of the Vedda cult of the dead, and failed to discover that even "Nature" Veddas make offerings to the spirits of their departed, their opinions and conclusions are necessarily given at some length on account of the undoubted importance of their work. "The Veddas of Dewilane told us that after death they became spirits or yakas, but as to whether these persisted (*lebten*) or not they never thought; they did not pray to them nor honour them. The 'Nature' Veddas from Danigala...told us in 1885

[1] *Helicteres isora*, L. [2] *Taprobanian*, Vol. I, p. 179.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

.114 769 775

that they worshipped neither their ancestors, nor a devil nor a god. Five years later the Veddas settled at Henebedda in the Nilgala district told us that they believed that the dead became spirits or yakas; but they did not make offerings to them. At Wewatte they likewise believe that the dead become yakas and there they invoke them in cases of sickness...gods they have none. A Vedda from the neighbourhood of Kalodai (Pallegama district) named Manikrala informed us that they worshipped children, father, mother, grandfather, grandmother—in short their dead relatives. In remembrance of the death of such relatives they gave a present to the first Buddhist priest whom they met. We therefore asked this 'Culture' Vedda whether his relatives continued to live as spirits after death, but he replied that he did not know; the present of rice was simply in remembrance of the deceased man. In answer to the further question whether they had a definite religion or worshipped a god, he replied that he had never thought about it, and he gave us the impression that this question and the idea it suggested were new to him.

"We found the idea of the existence of the departed as spirits further developed in an old 'Culture' Vedda of Mudagala near Mahaoya, named Sella. He said they had no gods besides their departed. Every year at the full moon they consumed yams and other food at the burying place. On this occasion they hold a dance in honour of the departed, invoke the dead by name and pray them to help them. At Omuni the corpses were buried in Sinhalese fashion and provided with burial presents; but two Veddas when we questioned them about their religion could tell us nothing on this point, and said that the departed were not honoured as gods[1]."

From these data the Sarasins conclude that "genuine 'Nature' Veddas either lack, or at the most have a quite uncertain idea of the persistence of the souls of the dead at the site of death, and that they make no offerings to their manes[2]." Further, they state "that among 'Culture' Veddas this idea has developed but little, for they either answered that they did not know whether they persisted as souls after death, or that they

[1] *Op. cit.* pp. 497 and 498. [2] *Loc. cit.*

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

had never thought the matter over. Nevertheless they honour the names which like the Sinhalese they call Yakas with food, dances or offerings. Any monotheistic idea of God is absent both in 'Nature' and in 'Culture' Veddas[1]."

The three strata of belief to which we referred at the beginning of this chapter and which exist among the Veddas of the present day, have not fused so thoroughly that there is any great difficulty in isolating them. We believe they may be tabulated as follows:

I. The Cult of the dead, including the cult of the spirits of recent ancestors, i.e. of the Nae Yaku and the *yaku* of certain Veddas who have been long dead and may well be regarded as heroes. The most important of these is Kande Yaka.

II. The Cult of foreign spirits, who have become naturalised and have taken the friendly protective nature of the Vedda *yaku*.

III. The Cult of foreign spirits who, though not often regarded as such, have retained their foreign nature and are in the main terrible or even hostile.

Another feature of the last stratum of thought is the endowment of true Vedda *yaku* with foreign attributes[2]. When the history of the island is considered, it is not surprising that the first condition, which may be considered the primitive religion of the Veddas, should nowhere be found standing alone at the present day. It is impossible to say how much the Indian invaders influenced the aboriginal inhabitants of Lanka (Ceylon) when they took possession of the island under Vijeyo about 500 B.C., for the few references made to Veddas in the ancient chronicles of the country throw no light on this subject.

Knox mentions that Veddas paid a tribute of game and honey to the Sinhalese, and in his day there were "wild and tame" Veddas, and it is certain that from the middle ages onwards there was a considerable amount of intercourse between at least the tamer Veddas and the Sinhalese. Therefore it is natural that foreign beliefs should have gradually infiltrated the native Vedda cult.

[1] *Ibid.*

[2] The invocation (No. xlii) to Ambārapoti Kiriamma given on p. 316 is an excellent example of this. Bilindi Yaka is here treated as if he were a Sinhalese or Tamil deity.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

presented to Kande Yaka the hunters would expect bad luck in future, and might even be bitten by snakes or attacked by bears.

The *Nae Yaku* are the spirits of the dead, they must report themselves to Kande Yaka as the chief of all the *yaku* and from him obtain permission to help the living and accept their offerings. Kande Yaka comes to the *Nae Yaku* ceremonies since the spirits of the dead could not be present without him. It was definitely stated that the spirits of the dead did not become *yaku* until the fifth day after death, but my informant knew nothing of the state of the spirits during this period though it was surmised that at least part of the time would be passed in seeking Kande Yaka or in his company, though there was no idea as to where Kande Yaka had his being. It was however stated, that the spirits of the dead were in hills, caves and rocks. The *Nae Yaku* including the spirit of the dead man are invoked on the fifth day after death. An offering is made of coconut milk and rice, if these are obtainable, but if not one consisting of yams and water is substituted. The shaman dances, holding in his hand a big ceremonial arrow for which no special name could be elicited, while the remainder of the community gather round. The shaman invokes the *Nae Yaku* and also Kande Yaka and Bilindi Yaka. The shaman becomes possessed and is supported lest he fall while the spirit of the deceased promises that yams, honey, and game shall be plentiful. He then sprinkles coconut milk or water from the offering on the relatives of the deceased as a sign of the spirit's favour. One or more of the relatives of the dead man may also become possessed. The shaman gives the relatives water and yams, putting their food into their mouths himself while he is possessed, and it appeared that this might cause the relatives to become possessed. At the end of the ceremony he asks the *Nae Yaku* to depart to where they came from and the spirits leave the offering.

Nothing was known concerning the Kataragam God or the *kolamadua* ceremony, though our informants said that they had heard of other Veddas performing this ceremony. Gale Yaka was not known, nor yet Wanagata Yaka.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

776 At Sitala Wanniya the principal *yaku* are Kande Yaka,
773 Bilindi Yaka, Bambura Yaka and the *Nae Yaku*. According to these people Kande Wanniya killed his younger brother Bilindi when the latter was only an infant. The story is that their parents were out hunting when Bilindi, feeling hungry, began to cry and would not desist in spite of the endearments lavished upon him by Kande. At last Kande threw the child on the ground in despair and so killed him.

776 It appeared that as a hunting hero Bambura Yaka is on the whole as important as Kande Yaka, though he is certainly not looked upon as so benevolent nor so loved as the latter, who helps men to kill deer and never sends sickness. Bambura Yaka is a somewhat grim spirit who although he gives yams and helps men to kill pig, also sends sickness and must be invoked to remove it, and he is also invoked when dogs are lost or taken by leopards. Because of his giving yams he is sometimes known as Ale (yam) Yaka, and yams are offered to him together with other vegetable food when this can be obtained.

224 The *kirikoraha* ceremony is performed to obtain game, in
776 gratitude for which the head and a portion of the flesh from
782 the breast of every deer killed is cooked as an offering to Kande Yaka and is afterwards eaten by the community. If this were not done Kande Yaka would be angry and little game would be killed.

The *kirikoraha* seen at Sitala Wanniya is described on pp. 223 to 226, and the ceremony at which Bambura Yaka is invoked on pp. 237 to 245.

775 The spirits of the dead become the *Nae Yaku* and with
782 Kande Yaka are invoked for success in hunting; a description
769 of this ceremony will be found on pp. 230 to 233. A few days after a death the dead man is invoked for assistance in hunting, being addressed as *mal paenae wanna*, and when the relatives of the group leave the cave to look for game they repeat the invocation as they move along. After this, if they are successful, they know that the spirit of the dead man has become powerful as a *Nae Yaku* and invoke him at the *kirikoraha* among the *Nae Yaku* called upon. The *Nae Yaku* must obtain permission

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

to accept offerings from Kande Yaka, and Kande Yaka must be invoked before the *Nat Yaku* to come to the offering, which should consist of coconuts, rice, areca nuts, betel leaves and, when obtainable, bananas.

We consider that the beliefs so far described represent the first stratum or basis of the Vedda religion and to be of its original substance. This is not the case with the remaining portion of the religion of the Veddas of Sitala Wanniya, which relates to certain foreign spirits who have become naturalised Vedda *yaku*. The Rahu Yaku are spirits of this sort. A fire ceremony occurs in the dance by which they are invoked and there is no doubt that these *yaku* are derived from the Sinhalese demon Gini Rahu Bandar. Yet in spite of this they have acquired a Vedda history, being regarded as long dead Veddas quite unconnected with the Rahu Bandar of the Sinhalese. The story concerning them is that long ago three Vedda brothers occupied a shelter together and one day one of them returned from hunting to find a stranger in the cave with his wife. The unknown rushed away and made good his escape, but the injured husband made up a big fire and in his rage and despair jumped into it. His *yaka* is one of the Rahu Yaku, the other two being the *yaku* of his two brothers who did not, however, burn themselves to death.

The help of the three Rahu Yaku is asked to cure sickness, to obtain success in hunting, and in collecting rock honey. Hunting and honey collecting both have their true Vedda patrons Kande Yaka and Dola Yaka, therefore the Rahu Yaku seem superfluous in these capacities. Further evidence as to their foreign origin is afforded by the fact that they carry "swords" (*kaduwa*), a weapon unknown to Veddas except in incantations[1], and that all three are considered somewhat dangerous, and cause sickness.

Indigollae Yaka, a foreign spirit (whose origin will be considered at length in Chapter VII), is looked upon as an attendant upon Kande Yaka in this community.

The names of certain spirits residing on various hills and

[1] Even these swords, one of which is shown in figure 11 (p. 256), had been naturalised and were said to represent *aude*.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

the names of certain spirits residing on various hills and
776 rocks were known; they were said not to be worshipped, although
[753] they were looked upon with awe and respect as they were believed to cause sickness.

These spirits are the Maha Yakini who are especially associated with the hills Nuwaragala, Walimbagala and a rock called Kalumal Ela. The chief of the Maha Yakini is the Maha Kiriamma, and the other Maha Yakini are her attendants. Although associated with rocks and hill-tops they are not invoked before taking honey in these places. It was stated that the Maha Yakini were formerly living people—old women—and that they were especially fond of children and might even steal them. It is for this reason that infants are protected by an arrow struck in the ground, and it is clear that something of their character as old Vedda women still survives in spite of their generally more or less unfriendly attributes.

Concerning the Maha Kiriamma nothing definite could be learnt: our informant had heard it said that she had been invoked in the old days, but knew nothing of this himself. Handuna said that what little knowledge they had of the Maha Kiriamma had travelled to them from the Bintenne Veddas near Horaborawewa[1].

771 In the Sitala Wanniya community, therefore, the second stratum is well developed and the third is indicated. The second and third strata, though probably not recently introduced, are, however, entirely subsidiary to the primitive cult of the friendly dead.

771 The Bandaraduwa community is one in which the second
769 stratum is so highly developed that at first sight it appears dominant, for after a death offerings are made to the Buddhist priest, but this is only done as an additional means of propitiation of the *Nae Yaku* who are still considered of the first importance, to whom an offering is made on the seventh day after death. Further,
771 Kande Yaka is still closely associated with the *Nae Yaku* and
776 is invoked with them, but he is no longer formally regarded as
777 the Lord of the Dead, that function has been usurped by Kanda Swami or Skanda known to these Veddas as "the Kataragam

[1] An invocation to the Maha Kiriamma (No. XXXIII), a fragment of a much longer formula (No. XXXIX), unknown to our informants, is given in Chapter X.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

God is almost, if not quite, thought of as their brother-in-law. In fact the divinity of the God and of his consort has not among the Veddas reached the proportions it has among the Sinhalese and Tamils. It has already been stated that among the Sinhalese the spirits of the dead who desire to become *Bandāra* present themselves to the Kataragam God, and from him obtain permission to receive offerings of cooked food (*adukku*) in return for benefits to be conferred, or to smite men with sickness and other disasters, and we were told that the Kataragam God would not refuse any spirit who approached him with this request[1].

Further, these Veddas hold that the man may become possessed by the Kataragam God in the same way as by the *Nae Yaku*, and the god is worshipped at certain shrines in the Kovil Vanamai district which are traditionally associated with Veddas and are said to be of Vedda origin. One of these at a place called Kokkadichchola is said to have arisen as follows.

A Vedda and his wife were cutting the trunk of a tree for honey when the tree began to bleed and they found in it not a bee's nest but an infant. The Vedda became possessed and while this condition lasted the God within him announced that he was the Kataragam God and that a temple must be built to him there. When the Vedda returned to his senses the child could not be found, but in its place was an image of the God.

Returning to the beliefs held by the Bandaraduwa people concerning the *Nae Yaku*, these can be best illustrated and explained by considering the events following the death of a Kovil Vanamai man called Tuta.

The day after our arrival at Bandaraduwa a Vedda called Kaira came to our camp sobbing and shaking and protesting that he could not stay long with us as his brother was dead. He seemed deeply affected, though another brother, Kaurale, who was with him appeared quite calm, which led us to suspect that his uncontrollable agitation was due to something more than mere affection for the dead man, and we soon discovered

[1] This belief in spirits of the dead obtaining license from the Kataragam God is also held by some rural Sinhalese.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

that this brother had lived with him and died in his hut, and that it was his duty to make an offering to the nearest Buddhist priest and to provide the necessities for a dance to the *Nae Yaku*, and that he had not the wherewithal to do these things. If these duties were neglected the spirit of the dead man would be angry, and after seven days when the spirit had become a *yaku* would cause misfortune and sickness and perhaps kill him. His manifest relief when we offered him the money needed to purchase the offerings showed that his sorrow for the loss of his brother was the least of his troubles, and he was quite gay when he started on his twenty mile walk to the nearest boutique with Rs. 3·50 in his betel pouch, and readily assented to our condition that he must return with his purchases so that the *Nae Yaku* ceremony might be performed near our camp. The local shaman, who was Vidane of the Vedda settlement, was perfectly ready to agree to this, indeed it suited him well, for it saved him the trouble of walking some eight miles to the scene of the death, and as he pointed out, the *Nae Yaku* could be invoked as well in one place as in another. It was important that the *Nae Yaku* dance should be held on the seventh day after death, since it was thought that the spirit of the dead man, which became a *yaku* on the third day after death, resorted to the Kataragam God and on the seventh day obtained authority from him to accept offerings and to help or molest the living according to the way in which he was treated by them. We were assured that whatever the intentions of the relations might be with regard to the spirit of the dead man, no danger was to be apprehended until the seventh day when the *Nae Yaku* ceremony should be performed, though this could not be done unless alms had previously been given to a Buddhist priest. The offerings which must be given to the priest are worth nearly three rupees and consist of the following foods and other objects. The numbers in parentheses after each object show the price in cents at the nearest boutique, some fifteen or twenty miles from Bandaraduwa. Rice 3 measures (60), 2 coconuts (20), 50 balls of jaggery sugar (15), 25 areca nuts (6), 5 tobacco leaves (12), 100 betel leaves (18), 1 plate (30), 1 cup (25), 1 mat (25), 1 handkerchief (36), half a bottle of coconut oil (50), the

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

total amounting to 2 Rs. 97 cents. The offering made to the *Nae Yaku* cost only 40 cents and consisted of a coconut, 50 betel leaves and a measure of rice.

The actual ceremony at which the spirit of the dead man was invoked and offerings made to it is described in Chapter IX, pp. 233 to 237.

Certain of the invocations used by the Kovil Vanamai Veddas, for instance, in invocation (No. XXXIV) to Indigollae Kiriamma for success in hunting and the invocations sung at the *kolamaduwa* ceremony, especially that to Unapane Kiriamma (No. XXXVIII), show how greatly foreign influence has altered the character of spiritual beings who existed in the original Vedda religion.

The Veddas of Uniche form a community in much the same stage of belief as the Veddas of Bandaraduwa. A few days after death the spirit of the deceased obtains permission from a "chief" to accept offerings and assist or harm the living. Our informants could not tell us who this chief was, but appeared to think that he had lived in comparatively recent times, and were confident that he was not Kande or Bilindi Yaka.

The *Nae Yaku*, including the spirit of the dead man, are invoked a few, perhaps five, days after a death has taken place. A pot of coconut milk with betel leaves in it is placed upon a rice pounder, and the shaman, holding a ceremonial arrow in each hand, dances round this, invoking the spirits, including that of the dead man. When possessed, the shaman sprinkles some of the coconut milk on the relatives and places betel leaves on their chests; the shaman also feeds the relatives from the bowl of coconut milk. The object of this dance is said to be to enable the *prana karaya* to become a *Nae Yaka*. It is clear that this is simply a condensed account of the ceremony we witnessed at Bandaraduwa, described on pp. 233 to 237.

The conditions prevailing at Henebedda, which at first were most puzzling, were found to be largely due to the influence of Tissahami "the Vedda Arachi," whose strong personality has been already referred to on p. 41. This man had taught the present Henebedda shaman much of his lore, and the latter

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

776
715

was but too anxious to assimilate and practise all that the Arachi would teach him. The knowledge he thus acquired spread to the younger members of the tribe, such as Sita Wanniya, who obviously took more interest in the ceremonial observances of his religion than any other of the younger men we met, and it was said that he would probably be the next shaman. The older men, on the other hand, appeared to know little of the developments introduced by the Arachi. To them Kande Yaka, Bilindi Yaka and the *Nae Yaku* were not only the most important spiritual powers, but appeared to be the only ones who were at all well known; the simplicity of the eschatological beliefs of these older men has already been referred to on p. 126 and agrees wonderfully well with those described by Bailey in 1863. "The result of the most patient inquiry is, that the Veddahs have a vague belief in a host of undefined spirits, whose influence is rather for good than evil. ...They believe that the air is peopled by spirits, that every rock and every tree, every forest and every hill, in short every feature of nature, has its *genius loci*; but these seem little else than mere nameless phantoms, whom they regard rather with mysterious awe than actual dread.... But besides this vague spirit-worship, they have a more definite superstition, in which there is more of system. This is the belief in the guardianship of the spirits of the dead. Every relative becomes a spirit after death, who watches over the welfare of those who are left behind. These, which include their ancestors and their children, they term their 'nehya yakoon,' kindred spirits. They describe them as 'ever watchful, coming to them in sickness, visiting them in dreams, giving them flesh when hunting.' In short in every calamity, in every want they call on them for aid; and it is curious that the shades of their departed children, 'bilindoo yakkoon,' or infant spirits, as they call them, are those which they appear most frequently to invoke....

775
769
539

"The ceremonies with which they invoke them are few as they are simple. The most common is the following: an arrow is fixed upright in the ground, and the Veddah dances slowly round it, chanting this invocation, which is almost musical in its rhythm:

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

DS
769
[539]

'Má miya, má miya, má deyá,
Topang koyihetti mittigan yandáh!'

'My departed one, my departed one, my God!
Where art thou wandering?'

The spirit of the dead is here simply called upon, without even the object for which it is invoked being mentioned. And this invocation appears to be used on all occasions, when the intervention of the guardian spirit is required, in sickness, preparatory to hunting, etc.

"Sometimes, in the latter case, a portion of the flesh of the game is promised as a votive offering, in the event of the chase being successful; and they believe that the spirits will appear to them in dreams and tell them where to hunt.

"Sometimes they cook food and place it in the dry bed of a river, or some other secluded spot, and then call on their deceased ancestors by name. 'Come, and partake of this! Give us maintenance as you did when living! Come! wheresoever you may be; on a tree, on a rock, in the forest, come!' and they dance round the food, half chanting, half shouting, the invocation.

"They have no knowledge of a Supreme Being. 'Is he on a rock? On a white ant-hill? On a tree? I never saw a God!' was the only reply I received to repeated questions. They have no idols, offer no sacrifices, and pour no libations. They cannot be said to have any temples, for the few sticks sometimes erected, with a branch thrown over them, are, I imagine, simply to protect their votive offerings[1]."

DS
114

Although in essentials this account is accurate, certain corrections and suggestions must be made. The "bilindoo yakkoon" are not "infant spirits" but obviously represent Bilindi Yaka who became a *yaka* while still a child. The arrow dance is clearly described and agrees with the dance we saw and photographed near Bendiyagalge, figures of which are given in Plate XXVI.

With regard to the spirits of the dead appearing in dreams and stating where game will be found, this, which is quite contradictory to our experience, has already been referred to on

[1] J. Bailey, *op. cit.* pp. 300—303.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

Gange Bandar, unknown among the wilder Veddas but worshipped by all village Veddas, was known at Unuwatura Bubula.

OMUNI.

The history of this settlement dating back to the first half of the last century has been given on pp. 45 and 46. The Omuni folk believe there are spirits (*yaku*) everywhere in the jungle, but none have seen them; further, there are many *yaku* of each kind or species such as the Indigollae Yaku, the Dadayan Yaku and many others including the Gale Yaku called the Jungle Yaku, who do not, however, frequent the jungle around Omuni. It was said that Ganga Bandar Deyo who lives in rocks in the river is greater than any of these. Omuni was one of the first Vedda settlements we visited, and as the importance of Sinhalese and Tamil gods and demons was not then appreciated no questions concerning these were asked. It is, however, reasonable to suppose that the Kataragam God and other mighty *deviyo* are worshipped. The spirits of the dead (*Nae Yaku*) are believed to be associated with rocks; on the whole they are kindly spirits, but it is necessary to invoke and propitiate them.

A *Nae Yaku* ceremony is held some little time after a death has taken place, at which the shaman dances with an *aude* before a *maesa* on which is placed an offering of cooked yams and other food, and the *maesa* is decorated with special clothes kept for that purpose. The *aude* is held in the smoke arising from gum-resin thrown on glowing charcoal, and then pressed on the head of all the male members of the community. If this were not done little game would be killed.

We have an account of another ceremony performed to cure sickness and when the chena had been reaped, but it is not clear what spirits were invoked at this; presumably the most important of these were certain of the *yaku* other than the *Nae Yaku*, though the *Nae Yaku* may have played a subordinate part. A shed or very rough house is built and hung with special clothes reserved for this purpose, those shown to us being rather old and worn pieces of linen woven at Batticaloa. A roughly made shelf forming a sort of altar is built in the shed on which

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

Bilindi Yaka nor Bambura Yaka is known. The *Nae Yaku* are of the company of Indigollae Yaka, and with the latter are invoked after a death, but the *Nae Yaku* are not asked for good luck in hunting. The *Nae Yaku* are invoked after every death; coconut, jaggery (palm sugar), and rice are placed on a *maesa*, offered to the *yaku* and afterwards eaten by the shaman and other members of the community. While invoking the spirits the shaman holds a cloth in his hands but no *aude*.

ULPOTA.

The Kataragam God, Gane Deyo and Vihara Deyo, are worshipped, as probably are many others. These spirits are all considered more important than the *Nae Yaku*, and it is to their aid that success in hunting and in honey getting is largely attributed, nevertheless it was clear that the *Nae Yaku* were thought of as helpful in these activities. Our informant stated that they had never heard of Kande Yaka, Bilindi Yaka, or Bambura Yaka, nor had they heard of the gods of the coast Veddas Kapalpe or Kadupe.

The spirits of the dead become *Nae Yaku*, and it is customary for a ceremony to be held eight days after a death, at which the spirits of all the recent dead are invoked. It was said that these spirits of the deceased joined the other *Nae Yaku* without asking permission from any other spiritual being and that the *Nae Yaku* came when they were invoked unaccompanied by any other spirit. The shaman does not hold an *aude* in his hand when invoking the *Nae Yaku*, but some rice and cooked pumpkin are put upon a *maesa* before which he dances. At the side of this is a pot of rice covered with a cloth supported on a rice pounder. The shaman faces the east whilst dancing, and appeals to all remembered *Nae Yaku* by name. It was said to be rare for any but the shaman to become possessed.

The *Nae Yaku* give honey and luck in hunting, and it is in order to obtain their favour that they are invoked, for if they were not they would give bad luck. When collecting tree honey the name of a dead man is called and he is requested to accept a little honey which is left at the foot of the tree for a short time, after which it is eaten by the honey gatherers. After killing game

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

a piece of flesh is offered to the *Nae Yaku* who are called by name, and then the Veddas eat it themselves.

Vihara Deyo is considered to send sickness, and he is invoked to make men whole again. Rice is cooked with milk usually obtained from the Tamil village of Horawila, and this with betel and areca nut is put upon a *maesa*. Only the shaman dances, and after the ceremony the offering is eaten by the whole community, including the sick man. Our informant did not know how the *yaka* or *deyo* causing the sickness was discovered, that being left to the shaman.

YAKURE.

The important spiritual agencies are:—Gange Bandara Deyo, Genikandia Deyo, Palugamman Deyo, Vihara Deyo, Mangara Deyo. Our informants knew of Indigollae Yaka but did not know if he ever was a man or had always been a spirit. Nothing was known of Kande Yaka, Bilindi Yaka, or Bambura Yaka. Dead shamans are thought to become *yaku*, and it is the spirits of these people who are the *Nae Yaku*: the fate of the spirits of ordinary folk is uncertain, but they do not become *Nae Yaku*. The *Nae Yaku* are danced to and invoked with the other *yaku* in order to cure sickness, but apparently they are not considered particularly important. A *maesa* is made and a cloth put over it, and on it are laid flowers of many kinds, betel leaves and areca nuts. Incense is burned before these offerings, in front of which the shaman dances facing the east. In some instances the *maesa* is built inside the temple, the shaman holds a cloth in his hand and a pot of rice cooked in milk is placed by the *maesa* on a rice pounder[1]. This is not tasted during the dance, but is eaten afterwards by the shaman and the sick man and other individuals of the community[2].

Kataragam Deyo is invoked especially to protect the chena and at harvest an offering is made which is afterwards eaten as at Elakotaliya.

[1] It must be remembered that Yakure is a great cattle breeding centre.

[2] This is an interesting contrast to the practice which Mr Parker informs us prevails in the south of the island, where food given to spirits is not eaten at all but is exposed in the jungle or some deserted place. The fact that at Yakure food offered to spirits, many of whom are of Sinhalese or Tamil origin, is eaten, is clearly a remnant of the Vedda belief that the spirits invoked are in the main beneficent.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

Mangara Deyo is invoked to protect cattle. About a month before our visit a nephew of the shaman suffered from headache and fever and woke up in the middle of the night in a great state of alarm. It was ascertained by stone augury that Mangara Deyo had sent the sickness, offerings were made to him, and the youngster speedily recovered.

There are no dances at a man's death or invocations to the spirits of the dead, nor did there appear to be any particular spirit who gave luck in hunting, indeed it seemed that game was little sought, the whole activity of the community being concentrated on cattle breeding.

The temple of Mangara Deyo is a small bare hut, with the roof projecting a few feet beyond that wall in which the door is cut. The inside of the temple is quite bare except for a narrow wooden rack about a foot wide which runs round the two side and back walls at a height of about four feet from the ground. In one corner of this was a pile of *aude* of all shapes and sizes which were said to belong to Mangara Deyo.

ROTAWAEWA.

Mr G. W. Jayawardene writes as follows concerning the beliefs of the Tamankaduwa "Veddas" described on p. 56. "They regard Adukganna Hulawali Yaka and Vedi Yaka as the important *yaku*. Adukganna Hulawali Yaka is the spirit to whom they look to be cured of sickness. When any one is ill he or she or someone on their behalf puts aside one or two cents which are wrapped in a clean piece of cloth and from each house an offering of food is made. Vedi Yaka is the spirit they look to for help in getting game. When an animal is killed the heart is taken and roasted and offered on a stick with the end split into four to hold the heart under a tree." Commenting on this Mr B. Horsburgh writes, "Adukganna Hulawali Yaka is the spirit of a Vedda who was killed by King Mahasena for refusing to leave Minneriya tank when he was going to restore it. The name Adukganna Hulawaliyaka means Hulawali Yaka who takes the *adukkuwa* or present of food (from the offering made to him). He is only seen in dreams,

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

796 535 787 rice, then he came to us and in the usual agitated manner of one possessed by the *yaku* said that he had come because we had asked for him. After some more dancing a little longer in front of the *bulatyahana* and after much bending and shaking over it and the rice pot the *yaka* of Kande Wanniya left the shaman and the ceremony ended.

Nae Yaku Ceremonies.

769 535 The large part the *Nae Yaku* play in the life of the Veddas and the great deference paid to them have been treated in the chapters on religion. We witnessed two *Nae Yaku* ceremonies which took place at Sitala Wanniya and Bandaraduwa respectively. The Bandaraduwa ceremony was performed on the seventh day after the death of the individual whose spirit was invoked, and we were allowed to prepare a dancing ground in the jungle, where it seemed that a tolerably good series of photographs might be obtained. However, the Veddas were obviously apprehensive of the spirit of the deceased until the ceremony had taken place, and insisted on performing it early in the morning with the result that the photographs obtained were all underexposed. We have however thought it best to publish a number of these without retouching them, an exception being made in the case of the two photographs reproduced in Plates XXXVI, fig. 2, and XXXVIII, fig. 1, the value of which do not depend on the facial expression of the performers while they were so underexposed that all detail would have been lost in a reproduction.

The ceremony performed at Sitala Wanniya was danced expressly because we wished to see it, but Handuna, the most important man in this community, was delighted when we suggested that they should dance to the *Nae Yaku*, because he said it would please the *yaku*, for when alone the community could seldom provide such good things to offer them as we promised to give.

Nae Yaku Ceremony at Sitala Wanniya. Although the Sitala Wanniya Veddas told us that the *Nae Yaku* could not come without Kande Yaka, Kande Yaka was not invoked at

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

the *Nae Yaku* ceremony that they performed for our benefit; the spirits of certain named relatives being called upon immediately. This may have been an omission caused by the ceremony having been begun in the spirit of a rehearsal (though it was certainly continued in earnest), but it seems more probable to us that this was not a mistake, as it was clearly stated that when a *Nae Yaka* is invoked for the first time after a death Kande Yaka is called upon at the beginning of the ceremony to bring the new *yaka*. The two *yaku* invoked at this ceremony were remembered by the community as influential men, and had probably been invoked frequently, and thus though still looked upon as attendants of Kande Yaka in a general way, they had probably gained a certain independence. Two pots of rice were cooked with coconut milk and placed on the *maesa* which was already in existence, having been built for one of the other dances, and an earthenware bowl of coconut milk was supported on a stake driven into the ground in the centre of the dancing plot. This bowl, the *kirikoraka*, was filled with coconut milk, and betel leaves were put in it. Kaira put on a hangalla, and held a piece of cloth in his hands. It was decided that the father-in-law of Handuna should be called, therefore an invocation was sung to him, and Kaira danced with the piece of cloth in his hand holding it at times over his head, and soon began to shout and leap showing that he was possessed. He went to Handuna, shouted and waved his cloth before him, and he too fell back and became possessed. There seemed to be no doubt that both Handuna and Kaira were considered to be possessed by the same *yaka*, i.e. by the spirit of the former's father-in-law Tuta Gamarale. Both bent their heads low over the *kirikoraka* and inspected the milk, then examined the offering of cooked rice, and returned to the *kirikoraka* quivering and gasping, and scattered some of the milk as a sign of pleasure. Then Kaira spoke to Vela in the low gasping voice of the *yaka* and stretched his arms towards Vela's child, who was suffering from yaws, and covered both the child and its mother with his cloth. He treated the other children in the same way, and also sprinkled coconut milk on their heads, and in the hurried *yaka* manner of one possessed smeared their faces with the milk, and we were told

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

769 535 that this was the manner in which the *yaka* of Tuta Gamarale usually showed favour to his grandchildren. Handuna and Kaira both returned to the *kirikoraha*, and shivering and quaking they bent their heads over it, shaking their hair over their faces, then both danced wildly (Handuna with an arrow in his hand), scattering the milk about, in this way showing their satisfaction with the offerings prepared for them. Both Handuna and Kaira went to several of the Vedda onlookers, and waving their cloths promised luck in hunting or favour of some kind. Then coming to each of us, they said while shuffling their feet and shaking their cloths "My grandchildren called me to help them, now you are here too, do you help them also." After feeding some of the small children with coconut milk they both returned to the *kirikoraha* and bent their heads low over it, crying, "Oh," and fell back, and the *yaka* of Tuta Gamarale left them.

A good deal of discussion followed among the Veddas, as many considered that the father of Handuna should be invoked, but all declared they were too tired to dance. At last Handuna prevailed upon his son-in-law Kaira to dance, explaining to us that they seldom had such good food as that which they were able to offer to-day and it pleased the *yaku* greatly, so his father should be called to share it.

So Kaira took the handkerchief and danced again, soon becoming possessed by Huda the father of Handuna. After showing favour to the progeny of Huda as before by holding the cloth over their heads he fell supine into the arms of Vela and it seemed as if the *yaka* was about to depart. Some of the men and boys began immediately to repeat the invocation to prevent this from happening, and after some seconds of immobility Kaira began to tremble slightly, and raised his right hand limply, let it fall again, and once more became inert. Then all joined vigorously in the invocation, and the wife of Kaira smeared his face with coconut milk, and with the aid of a leaf-cone fed him with the milk, that is to say, she managed to convey a few drops into his mouth, but still he remained unmoved. As this was ineffectual several of the grandchildren of the man whose spirit possessed Kaira fed the latter in the same way;

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

Vela did so also, with the result that Kaira dropped his head forward, shook violently and nodded his head sideways in a clumsy drunken fashion, and in a few seconds, still supported, jerked his limbs forwards and moved to the offering, after which he came back to where the women were standing and fell again into the arms of Vela. His chin was thrown back and his whole body trembled, while he gasped a word or two occasionally and fanned himself with his cloth vigorously. He held the cloth over the child suffering from yaws and promised to cure him, then putting both hands on Handuna he let his head fall on the latter's chest, and while trembling and shuffling his feet asked how Handuna fared. Handuna replied that game was scarce, and Kaira then spoke to the wife of Handuna and again to Handuna, and promised help. Then leaving Handuna he danced with wild leaping steps round the *kirikoraha* and gasped that now he must go and so leapt to the *maesa*, bent his head over the offering, and fell back exhausted. But he soon began to dance again, twirling the arrow blade between his fingers, till after a short time he returned to the *maesa*, and again bent his head over the offering; then with a great shout he took the pot of rice in both hands and spun it on the ground, and as he did so the *yaka* left him and he fell back.

Spinning the pot had the same significance here as at Henebedda, the direction towards which the pot dipped showing where game would be found. In this instance the pot was so full of rice that it did not dip at all, but this was considered a good omen as game might be expected on all sides.

After all was over Handuna took an arrow, and standing by the *maesa* pointed the arrow to the pots, and called upon all the *Nae Yaku* to feed. The pots were soon removed, the rice they contained was eaten, and the betel leaves from the *kirikoraha* chewed, but the milk in the *kirikoraha* was poured over a heap of twigs laid on the ground, being thus devoted to the *yaku*.

Nae Yaku ceremony at Bandaraduwa. Some account has already been given in Chapter II of the abnormal conditions prevailing at Bandaraduwa, so it will only be necessary to touch lightly upon this subject here. Some twenty years back these Kovil Vanamai Veddas, of whom the Bandaraduwa Veddas

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

177 769 ● are the remains, lived much the same life as the Henebedda Veddas now live, and like them were in transition between a purely hunting, honey-collecting life and the settled condition of the village Veddas who are mainly dependent on their chena produce. When we visited Bandaraduwa the Veddas were in a sorry condition and had settled down among the Sinhalese. It is true they dwelt in separate huts, but they were built on the same chena which had been allotted by the Government to them all, and like the Sinhalese they were paying taxes[1]. Naturally living in such close contact with the Sinhalese they have been influenced by them, and intermarriage has taken place, so that in many cases the Vedda identity has been lost. However, those of them who still considered themselves Veddas have retained a number of their old songs and many of their old customs, as comparison with the uncontaminated Sitala Wanniya Veddas showed. But even these customs, though Vedda at root, had been largely coloured and often overlaid by Sinhalese beliefs, so that when a death occurred not only was it necessary to make offering to the new Nae Yaka but it was equally important to propitiate the nearest Buddhist priest.

769 535 A *kirikoraha* was prepared in the usual way, and betel leaves put in it as well as the coconut milk. The shaman Tissahami, wearing a *hangala*, placed two *aude* on the *kirikoraha* and salaamed to the bowl. (Plate XXXVI, fig. 1.) Then he began to dance in the usual manner to the accompaniment of a drum played by a Vedda lad, first holding one *aude* and then one in each hand, that in the right hand being for Kande Yaka and that in the left for the *yaka* of the deceased Tuta. The use of the drum, which was of Sinhalese manufacture, must be regarded as an innovation, for although these people used them, and the Bendiyagalge people said they would if they had them, [177] the Sitala Wanniya Veddas declared that true Veddas never possessed or used a drum[2].

[1] It must be remembered that about sixty years ago Bailey, a Government official, encouraged the Veddas of Nilgala to make chena and since then the custom has spread. Sixty years ago these Veddas, and in fact all except the long established coast and village Veddas, must have lived a life very little different from that of the Sitala Wanniya group of to-day.

[2] The readiness with which this community accepted an innovation was demonstrated

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

769
535

Fig. 1. Nae Yaku ceremony, the shaman salaams to the offering (Bandaraduwa)

Fig. 2. Nae Yaku ceremony, the shaman pretends to stab the offering (Bandaraduwa)*

[facing p. 234a]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

769
535

Fig. 1. Nae Yaku ceremony, the shaman possessed falls into the arms of a supporter (Bandaraduwa)

Fig. 2. Nae Yaku ceremony, the shaman sprinkles milk from the offering on the brothers of the deceased (Bandaraduwa)

[facing p. 234 b]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

769
535

Fig. 1. Nae Yaku ceremony, the shaman possessed by Kande Yaka tracks the sambar (Bandaraduwa)*

Fig. 2. Nae Yaku ceremony, the brother of the deceased falls back possessed (Bandaraduwa)

[facing p. 234 c]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

769
535
787

At the same time an invocation was sung, presumably to Kande Yaka and the *Nae Yaka*, but our notes are not quite clear about this; it was however certain that Kande Yaka, Bilindi Yaka and the *Nae Yaka* all came, indeed that the last was unable to come without Kande Yaka, but it was not clear when each *yaka* came and went, and it seemed quite possible for the shaman to be possessed by several *yaku* at once.

As the shaman danced he stabbed at the *kirikoraha* with both the *aude* (Plate XXXVI, fig. 2), in this way the *Nae Yaka* by whom he was possessed was pleased to show his power. Sometimes as Tissahami made the usual half turn on his heels he held the *aude* against his hips pointed end outwards. Soon he began to quiver and bend his head forward, and was immediately supported by one of the onlookers, into whose arms he fell back (Plate XXXVII, fig. 1). After lying still for a few seconds he revived and began to dance wildly, stabbing the *aude* in the air; this was in order to frighten people, for although the feeling of the *Nae Yaka* towards his living relatives was friendly, provided always that he had been well treated by them and had been offered sufficient rice, coconut milk and betel leaves, the *yaka* was not averse to showing his newly acquired power. After this, in order to show his favour to his relatives the shaman went to both the brothers of the dead man in turn and sprinkled them with coconut milk from the *kirikoraha* (Plate XXXVII, fig. 2), he put his arms on their shoulders and promised them luck in hunting, and taking two betel leaves from the *kirikoraha* he put one on the chest of each man, and the leaves being wet with the milk stayed where they were placed for a short time. Suddenly leaping away the shaman, now apparently possessed by Kande Yaka and probably with the spirit of the *Nae Yaka* still within him, tracked an imaginary sambar round the dancing ground, holding the two *aude* crosswise to represent a bow and arrow. This is shown in Plate XXXVIII, fig. 1, which also shows the betel leaves on the chest

by the shaman who wanted to wear Sinhalese leggings with bells, although he said these had not been worn before in a Vedda ceremony. The leglets, which he greatly admired, had been worn by a peasant Sinhalese at a devil ceremony which had been held two days before at a village a few miles distant.

177

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

769 535 787 of each of the two brothers of the deceased. The shaman made no feint to shoot but soon put the *aude* on the *kirikoraha*, and taking a pot of rice which had been prepared twirled it vigorously in his hands, and though this may have represented Kande Wanniya spinning the rice pot for prophecy, the shaman put the pot down without actually spinning it. Supported by one of the Veddas he again danced round the *kirikoraha* and swayed his body violently; at times he would spring suddenly to one side stabbing fiercely at the air, after which (bending over the *kirikoraha*) he fell back and remained perfectly still with rapt expression and head slightly bent, one hand resting on the edge of the milk pot. It seemed as though the Yaka was about to leave the shaman, but as the relatives did not desire this (perhaps because the Yaka had not yet fed them as a sign of greater favour) they all sang the invocation together. The Yaka heard them, for suddenly the shaman began to tremble, the trembling grew to a vigorous shaking, and he sprang forward and again bent his head over the *kirikoraha*; then with body bent and head drooping he moved a little way, taking short leaping steps, and again fell back exhausted. But he soon revived and took the *aude* and approached the dead man's brothers in turn, who both became possessed by the *Nae Yaka* and fell back. Then the shaman smeared their bodies with coconut milk, throwing some into their mouths, and they soon showed signs of life again. Plate XXXVIII, fig. 2, and Plate XXXIX, fig. 1, show the two brothers of the deceased possessed by the *Nae Yaka*; in the latter figure the body of the unconscious man has been smeared with the contents of the *kirikoraha*, while the remains of that with which he had been fed hangs about his mouth and chin. It will be observed that in both these figures the supporters are Sinhalese; this was because there were not enough grown Vedda men in the community to support the men possessed by Yaku. All this time the invocation was being repeated by one of the youngest Veddas present, who we were told was the dead man's sister's son, that is the dead man's potential son-in-law. The shaman now fed the dead man's brothers with rice from the offering, and then fell exhausted to the ground. One of the onlookers immediately came

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

769
535
787

Fig. 1. Nae Yaku ceremony, the other brother of the deceased is also possessed (Bandaraduwa)

Fig. 2. Nae Yaku ceremony, the shaman possessed by the Nae Yaka embraces the brothers of the deceased (Bandaraduwa)

[facing p. 236 a]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

769
535
787

Fig. 1. Nae Yaku ceremony, the Nae Yaka shows his power (Bandaraduwa)

Fig. 2. Nae Yaku ceremony, the shaman feeds the members of the community (Bandaraduwa)

[facing p. 236 b]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

to his assistance when he began to quiver and sway, then moved and put both arms round one of the dead man's brothers as a sign of kindness from the deceased. (Plate XXXIX, fig. 2.) The brothers said: "It was good of you to come. See we have given you food, now do not come back again," and the *yaka* agreed. The shaman then took the *aude* and transfixed a betel leaf with each and danced and again showed favour to the relatives by giving them each another betel leaf, after which one of the relatives danced, but the shaman threatened to stab with the *aude* the men who were not relatives of the dead man. (Plate XL, fig. 1.) Soon both the shaman and the two brothers fell back and the Yaka departed from them. When the shaman revived, he bent his head over the *kirikoraha* as a sign of respect; then holding both hands over the rice pot he repeated a silent charm, asking any of the other *yaku* who might have come to the ceremony to depart peacefully. After this he fed each relative of the dead man, holding the *kirikoraha* to their mouths, as is shown in Plate XL, fig. 2.

The Invocation of Bambura Yaka.

The Veddas invoke Bambura Yaka for help in getting pig and yams, both staple foods, the latter being an extremely important element in their diet. The dance is pantomimic, and depicts a boar hunt in which Bambura, the boar-hunting hero, was aided by a Vedda woman, who killed the pig with an arrow she shot from her husband's bow and whose spirit is therefore called Dunne Yakini (Bow Spirit), while the spirit of this woman's husband who turned the boar with his yam stick (*ule*) has become Ule Yaka, that is (Yam-stick Spirit). This ceremony, though not so widely spread, is as dramatic as that in which Kande Yaka stalks and kills sambar deer. We saw it danced by Kaira of Sitala Wanniya and by Wannaku of Uniche.

The invocation of Bambura Yaka at Sitala Wanniya. The dance at Sitala Wanniya will be described first, since the story was told us here in its more complete form. Once long ago many Vedda men and women went out in search of yams,

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

motions, once more put their arms round them, soon after which the dancers fell limply into their arms. The leader of the dance seemed especially excited at this stage and, trembling and quivering all over, stood back to the pole and wildly waved his scarf in the air. Soon his movements became less vigorous, his head nodded on his shoulders and hung down on his chest as he addressed the other dancers in a harsh and broken voice (Plate LXXI). In view of the Vedda ceremonies which we subsequently saw we have no doubt that he prophesied good fortune. It appeared to us that this old man really presented the ordinary characteristics of Vedda "possession," i.e. the dance, though only a rehearsal, had produced the customary effects associated with it, and certainly this old man's muscles continued to quiver irregularly for some time after the dance was over. As for the remaining dancers we have no doubt that the dance remained for them as it had begun, simply a rehearsal and an amusing piece of acting.

535 796 787

Such dances are held only to cure sickness or in return for good crops, and it was emphatically denied that anything similar took place after childbirth or death.

535 796

Very little was elicited concerning death and mourning ceremonies. The corpse is washed, and it seemed that although this is usually done by a barber or *dhobis* (professional washerman) it might be done by one or more of the relatives of the dead man. The grave must be at some distance from the habitations of the living and also from their cultivation patches. No fire is lit on the grave. A feast is held a few days after burial, which appears to be called *bati bane*, and the food for this, especially rice, is provided by the near relatives of the dead man and distributed. A *kudaram* is built upon which the food is placed for "a short time" as an offering to Kapalpei, after which it is eaten by the assembled people.

764

This account agrees with that given by the Sarasins, who record that a coast Vedda, Pereman, when asked about his religion "laughed and said they had that of the Tamils, they honoured their dead by cooking rice in front of their house, folding their hands, saying a few words and then eating the rice. As they did this they spoke the name of the deceased and said: 'Help

769 ● 177

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

us in danger, sickness etc.' When we enquired whether their dead lived on as spirits he replied, they did not consider whether the departed were living or dead, they were just spirits, in Tamil *sami* or *dewi*, in Sinhalese *yako*; all spirits were alike, neither good nor bad. Another coast Vedda named Patiniya told us that their religion was that of the Tamils. In memory of their dead, whom they called *yako*, they cooked rice and ate it; they invoked the *yaka* in sickness, etc.[1]"

Just as Kapalpei sent sickness, so death was also attributed to him, but perhaps not epidemics, for it appeared to be generally considered that a single death would satisfy him for the time, so that it would be days or weeks before he would be expected to send sickness or death again.

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 498.

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

wildest Veddahs are without an "instinct of worship." They believe that the air is peopled by spirits, that every rock and every tree, every forest and every hill, in short every feature of nature, has its *genius loci*; but these seem little else than mere nameless phantoms, whom they regard rather with mysterious awe than actual dread. 776

Such appears to be the form which the superstitions of every savage tribe naturally assume,—the necessity for a belief in something more than human, imparting to the commonest objects a supernatural character. But besides this vague spirit-worship, they have a more definite superstition, in which there is more of system. This is the belief in the guardianship of the spirits of the dead. Every near relative becomes a spirit after death, who watches over the welfare of those who are left behind. These, which include their ancestors and their children, they term their "néhya yakoon," kindred spirits. They describe them as "ever watchful, coming to them in sickness, visiting them in dreams, giving them flesh when hunting." In short in every calamity, in every want they call on them for aid; and it is curious that the shades of their departed children, "bilindoo yakkoon," or infant spirits, as they call them, are those which they appear most frequently to invoke.* 776 775 769

It is a pretty belief, and contrasts favourably with the superstitions of the Kandyans, who have spirits enough in their system, but almost all thoroughly malignant, and needing constant propitiation. But the Veddah spirit-world is singularly free from evil. I can find only one *absolutely* malignant spirit in it whom they really fear;† though, like all savages, they have an undefined awe of the nameless spirits whom they believe to haunt the darkness. The shades of their ancestors and of their children seem to be purely benevolent. The ceremonies with which they invoke them are few as they are simple. The most common is the following. An arrow is fixed upright in the ground, and the Veddah dances slowly round it, chanting this invocation, which is almost musical in its rhythm. 769 776 782

"Mâ miya, mâ miy, mâ deyâ'
Topang koyihetti mittigan yandâ'h!" [539]

* They also speak of them as "witera yakkoon," "child-spirits." They seem to prefer their great-grandmother (maha kiri amma) to the rest of their defunct ancestors; but I cannot ascertain any cause for their preference for the old lady. I may, however, be wrong in describing it as a preference. It may be the reverse, for she is invoked chiefly in cases of sickness, when the patient is supposed to be suffering from the malignity of a spirit. [753]

† Awâramada Yakko, who especially injures women, lying wait for them in the forest.

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

769
776
[539]

"My departed one, my departed one, my God!
Where art thou wandering?"*

The spirit of the dead is here simply called upon, without even the object for which it is invoked being mentioned. And this invocation appears to be used on all occasions when the intervention of the guardian spirits is required, in sickness, preparatory to hunting, etc.†

[224] Sometimes, in the latter case, a portion of the flesh of the game is promised as a votive offering, in the event of the chase being successful; and they believe that the spirits will appear to them in dreams and tell them where to hunt.

Sometimes they cook food and place it in the dry bed of a river, or some other secluded spot, and then call on their deceased ancestors by name. "Come, and partake of this! Give us maintenance as you did when living! Come, wheresoever you may be; on a tree, on a rock, in the forest, come!" And they dance round the food, half chanting, half shouting, the invocation.‡

776 782 They have no knowledge of a Supreme Being. "Is he on a rock? On a white ant-hill? On a tree? I never saw a God!" was the only reply I received to repeated questions.§ They have

* I find in my notes another version of this invocation, which slightly alters the first words. It runs thus: "Ma mini, ma mini!—my gem, my gem;" but "miya," which signifies "dead," is the most common. [The word in the invocation translated "God" is evidently a corruption of the Sanskrit deva, a god or divinity. EDIT.]

† And they are invoked without any ceremony at all—by a mere mental ejaculation. I once saw a Veddah make a bad shot, and he threw down his bow with a gesture of impatience, saying—"That was because I did not call on my Billindoo Yakkoon." And before making his next shot, he muttered an invocation.

‡ A superstition similar somewhat to this is prevalent among the neighbouring Singhalese. If a man die who has lived a good life, his relatives give alms to the poor, calling on the dead by name to look down on them, and enable them to follow his good example. If he has lived an evil life, alms are also given; but these are propitiatory offerings for his sins, and to avert his evil influence from his survivors. For, in this case, he has become an evil spirit, apt to injure his own family and their cattle unless civilly treated. The degree of malignity depends on the degree of evil in the life led by deceased. If he dies with a hankering after worldly things, he haunts the house in which he lived in a variety of forms—perhaps most commonly that of a toad or a cobra, probably because these frequent houses. It is also, in some parts, a common belief that if a man die, and shortly after one of the family fall sick, and is not cured by the usual medicines and ceremonies, the sickness is attributed to the spirit of the dead, who must be propitiated by a mess of rice, left in the house for him. This, generally, is supposed to effect a cure.

[782] § It is curious that in one of their invocations, "mā Deyā", my God! occurs, see before; and that of thunder they say, "a spirit, or a god has cried out".

2:Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

no idols, offer no sacrifices, and pour no libations. They cannot be said to have any temples, for the few sticks sometimes erected, with a branch thrown over them, are, I imagine, simply to protect their votive offerings. [782] [776] [346]

They have no system of medicine, though they will accept medicine when given. In cases of sickness they sprinkle water on the patient, invoking their deceased ancestors to heal him. Sometimes they simply utter the name of spirits as they dance round the sick man. Sometimes a garland of flowers is offered to the spirit who has afflicted him.* They believe in the efficacy of what are called devil dances, but are ignorant of the art of a Kattadia, or devil dancer. I can find no trace of metempsychosis, so universal amongst Buddhists. [755] [769] [775]

I have now described what is the *actual* religious belief, if it can be so called, of the Veddahs; and it was only by dint of often repeated visits among them, and very careful inquiry, that I succeeded in obtaining the particulars I have recorded. [771] [174]

But, that at some period of their history they had some knowledge of a more "systematized" faith, their charms and invocations, some of their customs, and the very names they bear, seem conclusively to prove.

Such testimony is invaluable. For neither the inquirer, whose zeal may induce him to jump too hastily at conclusions, nor the people themselves, can distort it, or give it a strained interpretation. But this evidence all points to something long past, to a faith once, at least, familiar to them, but now forgotten. At the least, it indicates a former contact with civilization, and proves that they have a history more full of incident than would belong to a race which was always as barbarous as it is now.†

In their charms the sun and moon are frequently invoked, although in their daily life neither luminary is respected.‡ [821]

---

* They invoke the Gal-Yakko, spirit of the rock; Wedde-Yakko, spirit of the chase; Oonapāna-Yakko, of whom I have no knowledge; and the shade of their great-grandmother. They also propitiate "Maha-Yakkhini", who appears rather an evil personage. It is to her that they offer a garland of flowers. They describe her as a "foreigner", and say that they know nothing about her, but acquired their awe of her from the Singhalese. The Weddi-Yakko is known to the Singhalese; hunters offer flowers, blood, and burnt meat to this spirit, before hunting, to secure their success. Oonapāna-Yakko is known to the Singhalese of the Weddiratos, but I do not think he is generally known to the Singhalese.

† Vide Tennent's account of the Veddahs, especially vol. ii, part iii, chap. ix, p. 441-2. "They have no knowledge of a God, nor of a future state, no temples, no altars, prayers, or charms; in short, no 'instinct of worship' except, it is reported, some ceremonies analogous to devil worship."

‡ This occurs in several charms. The following (which, though not known to the Singhalese, as applied to *wild boars*, is identical with one known to them to drive away toothache), not only invokes the sun and moon, [789]

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

own departed; spirits, real and intimate, inhabiting like themselves rock and tree and stream; human enough to pester or assist, to take vengeance if angered, and, if propitiated, tutelary over the Vedda's abodes. It is owing to the maliciousness of these spirits, and less from any fear of wild animals, that the Vedda is averse to travelling alone in the jungle; though, when necessity compels, he will do so, armed only with his little axe. Nor do they permit their women to adorn themselves too much for fear of attracting the *hetha* (devil).*

When a person dies it is the *hetha* that killed him; and the *hetha* of the dead one remains by the corpse and haunts the vicinity for years. Hence the great fear these people have of their dead; a fear that sometimes makes them cover with leaves and abandon a dying person, be he or she their best beloved, lest their necks be squeezed; a fear that keeps them away for years from caves where deaths have occurred.

In the course of time the spirit of a dead person loses its individuality in a general spirit world, the spirits of the more recently dead, and therefore the better known to succeeding generations, supplanting the older. A belief embodying the beautiful thought, that we really do not die until those who knew us and loved us are also dead.

The Vedda religion then is a cult of the spirits of the dead; not so much an ancestor worship, though a few names of long dead Veddas, such as Bilinde Yakka and Kande Yakka have a place in it, as a homage to spirits recently deceased (*Nae-Yakka*).†

The named demons of the pure Veddas are few, and their propitiatory ceremonies but two or three. Nevertheless, a half-Vedda devil-dancer of Galmede gave me the names of a hundred devils, and unctuously expounded a demonology as involved as it was terrible; taking special delight in describing a dance in which men with hideous masks and jangling bells attached to deer-skin greaves, their bodies stained in imitation of blood, swayed great Vedda *audes* mounted on carved handles, and made the forest echo to thundering drum-beats and demoniac yells.

Of male demons there were:—(1) Tree demons of the *Na* and *Bo* tree; seven to each tree in order of precedence: (2) Rock demons (*Gal-vanniyas*) named after various hills: (3) Flower demons (*Ravathath*): (4) *Bandara* demons; (5) *Vanniyas*—the spirits of four Veddas who were crushed to death in a cave by the fall of the rock overhead; with a shout of "ha" they were transformed into devils. Then there were innumerable female demons, a wife to each male demon (*Kalusalees*, *Peli-hanayas* and *Hanna-hanayas*).

From all this it will not be wondered at that the Veddas are highly superstitious, and ascribe to many an ordinary incident of life supernatural significance. It is, for instance, an ill omen to meet a Buddhist priest or Moorman when setting out on a journey, or to knock the big toe against a stone or stump. Should a gekko cry when a plan is under discussion, or a blood-sucker‡ or Brahamin lizard fall on one, the portent is bad.

*The Veddas seem to make no distinction between the words devil and spirit, the term *yakka* being used for either; thus *Gal-Yakka* means rock-demon, *Nae-Yakka* ancestral spirit. *Hetka* also means spirit or devil and is, if anything, the more malevolent being. *Vanniya* is another word synonymous with *yakka* and *hetka*.

†The Veddas, by Seligmann; page 30.

‡A species of lizard.